

## Narrative

### General Features of Narrative

#### Social Purpose

Narratives construct a pattern of events with a problematic and/or unexpected outcome that entertains and instructs the reader or listener. Narratives entertain because they deal with the unusual and unexpected development of events. They instruct because they teach readers and listeners that problems should be confronted, and attempts made to resolve them. Narratives incorporate patterns of behaviour that are generally highly valued.

#### Structure

Narratives are usually organised to include:

- ❖ Orientation — this stage ‘alerts’ the listener and/or reader to what is to follow, usually by introducing the main character/s in a setting of time and place.
- ❖ Complication — in this stage a sequence of events, which may begin in a usual pattern, is disrupted or changed in some way so that the pattern of events becomes a problem for one or more of the characters, eg *a visit to a deserted house becomes a serious problem for the narrator when he finds himself locked in a house where there is no handle to the door*. The events are evaluated by the character/s, thus making it clear to the reader/listener that a crisis has developed, eg *‘I was terrified when the door slammed shut. How was I going to get out? There was no handle on the inside and nobody knew where I was. My heart was racing and I felt sick with fear as I banged on the door’*.
- ❖ Resolution — the problems of the complication are resolved or attempted to be resolved in the resolution. A pattern of normalcy is restored to the events, but the main character/s has changed as a consequence of the experience.
- ❖ Coda — this stage is optional. It makes explicit how the character/s has changed and what has been learned from the experience.

#### Grammar

Common grammatical features of narrative texts include:

- ❖ use of particular nouns to refer to or describe the particular people, animals and things that the story is about;
- ❖ use of adjectives to build noun groups to describe the people, animals or things in the story;
- ❖ use of time connectives and conjunctions to sequence events through time;
- ❖ use of adverbs and adverbial phrases to locate the particular incidents or events;
- ❖ use of past tense action verbs to indicate the actions in a narrative;
- ❖ use of saying and thinking verbs to indicate what characters are feeling, thinking or saying.

## Narrative

### Teaching Notes: Stage 3

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In Stage 3, students should be encouraged to explore the themes and issues that authors deal with through the content of narratives. This exploration should include narratives from other cultures. Students should become aware of how writers 'position' readers to regard issues and themes in particular ways through the language they use to portray characters and events. The way dialogue is constructed is crucial in developing the personalities of characters. Students should be encouraged to explore how 'point of view' is established in a narrative and how the narrative can be substantially changed by telling or writing it from the point of view of another character. These approaches will help students develop a critical orientation to narrative texts so that they are not taken at 'face value' but questioned and challenged by students. Students should also be encouraged to explore narrative writing for dramatic performance.

#### Structure

Students should be encouraged to read and develop longer, well-structured narratives. They should learn how writers 'position' readers through thinking and feeling verbs, and the use of evaluative language to 'read' issues and themes emerging from the content of a narrative. Students should be encouraged to experiment with different techniques for writing narratives, eg *changing point of view in different stages of the narrative; experimenting with different ways of organising the time sequence of events*. These approaches to narrative writing are challenging and students will be best assisted if they approach them first through models and jointly constructed texts that have been carefully planned and researched. Students should be encouraged to write familiar narratives as drama scripts for performance. Again, jointly constructed texts will help students to work successfully with this approach. Students should be encouraged to reflect on techniques they have used to achieve goals. Students should also be encouraged to assess their use of the narrative structure in their own writing.

#### Content

Students should be encouraged to read, view and write narratives in a range of fields. They should be encouraged to explore the fields of narratives from a range of cultures and to consider how they help us learn about the values of different cultures. Researching new content areas will still be an important aspect of preparation for narrative writing.

#### Links with Other Key Learning Areas

- ❖ Human Society and Its Environment: narratives based on oral histories of people giving accounts of their migration to Australia.
- ❖ Creative and Practical Arts: identifying the narrative structure applied in a piece of drama.



## Grammar Focus

- ❖ Using word chains.
- ❖ Using conjunctions and connectives to reorder events and create causal relationships between events, eg *so, because, consequently*.
- ❖ Using the structure of the noun group to build descriptions, eg *She had long black hair, which reached halfway down her back*.
- ❖ Using metaphors, idiom and personification in descriptions, eg *She was a tower of strength (idiom); The warm rays of the sun stroked her face (personification)*.
- ❖ Using complex sentences to build relationships of time, place, reason, manner, condition between the events of clauses, eg *When she was alone in the house she heard a strange, creaking noise behind her; They decided to take shelter in the deserted house because the rain and hailstones were so heavy; If she could make somebody hear her by banging on the door she might have a chance of getting out of the room*.
- ❖ Changing the beginning focus of the clause, eg *Behind her she heard a strange creaking noise; She heard a strange creaking noise behind her*.

## Grammar Terminology

Students at this stage should be using terms such as:

- ❖ word chains
- ❖ structure of sentence, eg *compound sentence, complex sentence*
- ❖ theme of the clause
- ❖ structure of clause, subject, verb, indirect object, object (syntax), doer, action, done to, receiver (meaning)
- ❖ structure of noun group
- ❖ metaphor
- ❖ idiom
- ❖ personification.

## Spoken Narratives

Students should be encouraged to give dramatic readings of narratives they have written in script form or narratives written as plays. Students should be given ample time to rehearse presentations, which could be performed and/or recorded. Drawing on familiar experience, students may improvise spoken narratives about particular themes or issues.

## Written Narratives

Students should be encouraged to experiment with narrative structure in prose writing and adapt written narratives for dramatic performance. Students need to read models of drama scripts before jointly constructing and independently writing such scripts. Students should be encouraged to write narratives that experiment with the ordering of events. They should also be encouraged to write about particular issues and themes in their narratives. Again, students should jointly construct narratives that make new demands on their writing abilities before writing them independently. Students should also be editing and assessing their work according to stated criteria. Students should be encouraged to publish narratives that can be read by other classes. Students can ask readers to make responses to the texts on the basis of guideline questions.

**Stage 2 and Stage 3****ESL Teaching Notes: Narrative****Talking and Listening** *Teaching points to consider***ESL Scales levels: Oral Interaction 1, 2, 3**

- ❖ Use illustrated traditional fairy stories and well-known legends. Many of these will have universal appeal and will allow the students to utilise their cultural knowledge. Alternatively, use simple picture books with no text but that have a clear plot.
- ❖ Match word orally to visual text of essential nouns in the narrative before reading or paraphrasing the narrative, eg *students might not know what a ballroom is*.
- ❖ Paraphrase or simplify the narrative to a few basic sentences, some details can be omitted.
- ❖ Transcribe the student's retelling of narrative, using as much as possible of the student's content words for reading and writing activities.
- ❖ Act out narratives in small groups using props.
- ❖ Use rhymes and chants with repetition and actions.

**ESL Scales levels: Oral Interaction 3, 4, 5**

- ❖ Select predictable, visually well-supported narratives that are well within the student's understanding so oral discussion can move from meaning to the development of metalanguage (title, words, sentences, grammar, point of view).
- ❖ Allow one-to-one situations for students to copy your intonation and pronunciation as they will now be attuned to the finer sounds of English.

**ESL Scales levels: Oral Interaction 5, 6, 7, 8**

- ❖ Provide activities for small groups so students may 'try out' new vocabulary.
- ❖ Focus on colloquialisms, metaphor and culturally specific humour in class discussion.
- ❖ Provide activities focusing on building up noun groups orally, eg *a chair; an old chair; a rickety old chair*.

## Reading and Writing *Teaching points to consider*

### **ESL Scales levels: Reading and Responding, Writing 1, 2, 3**

- ❖ Use students' own transcripts of traditional stories and picture books. Often a student is not willing to read and write words they don't know orally. Use sequencing and cloze activities to focus on meaning (ie content words such as verbs and nouns only).
- ❖ Ask students to locate quoted speech in narratives. Show a range of ways quoted speech might be presented.
- ❖ Make up simple true and false (yes and no) statements based on their narratives, eg *The princess is a girl*.
- ❖ Make up simple phonological awareness activities based only on the words students know.
- ❖ Make speech bubbles next to characters, for students to recycle vocabulary.

### **ESL Scales levels: Reading and Responding, Writing 3, 4, 5**

- ❖ After shared reading, involve students in a variety of oral activities; discussion is required before writing.
- ❖ Build word banks of synonyms expanding vocabulary; this is important as ESL students often only need one word to communicate a concept orally at school and then experience difficulty encountering synonyms in reading.
- ❖ Build word banks of action verbs and act out. Control amount of new vocabulary in a session (5 or 6 maximum), eg *ghostly verbs: tremble, shake, quake etc.*
- ❖ Focus on use of plurals.
- ❖ Highlight reference chains (who is speaking in a narrative, eg *he, Tom*) as ESL learners often have difficulty tracking the subject.



**Narrative: Stage 3****Text Structure**

Orientation gives a setting for events and introduces 'I' the narrator

Complication includes evaluation, eg I didn't mind this

Resolution

Coda

**The Fight**

It all happened when I was walking home from school. Two kids from my class decided to pick on me. They started yelling stupid names like spazzo, pigface etc. I didn't mind this. I also didn't mind Kelly punching me in the shoulder. What I did mind was that Kelly kept me occupied while Matthew (better known as Roberts) rode my bike around the cul de sac of the street.

This was harmless. But, still riding, he kicked off my bag and jumped off the bike leaving it to fall. This made me sore. I gave in to my temper. When Matthew saw this he took off. So it was me and David Kelly to battle it out. I chased him around and around the street. When I finally caught up to him I threw punches galore.

Most of them missed. Kelly managed to escape and run home. I think I was the victor, but if I was, I don't think it was worth it.

**Language Features**

Use of word chains to build topic information, eg pick on, yelling, punching, mind, didn't mind, chased, threw punches

Use of complex sentences, eg It all happened when I was walking home from school

Use of action verbs, eg walking, punching

Use of saying verbs, eg yelling

Use of thinking verbs, eg mind

Use of complex verbal group, eg started yelling

Use of conjunctions to build relations of time and cause between events, eg when, so

Use of past tense, eg chased, caught

Use of saying and thinking verbs to indicate what characters are thinking and feeling, an important aspect of narrative

## Stage 3

## TALKING AND LISTENING

## Narrative

### Outcomes

- TS3.1 Communicates effectively for a range of purposes and with a variety of audiences to express well-developed, well-organised ideas dealing with more challenging topics.
- TS3.2 Interacts productively and with autonomy in pairs and groups of various sizes and composition, uses effective oral presentation skills and strategies and listens attentively.
- TS3.3 Discusses ways in which spoken language differs from written language and how spoken language varies according to different contexts.
- TS3.4 Evaluates the organisational patterns of some more challenging spoken texts and some characteristic language features.

### Indicators

- *participates in group discussions dealing with more challenging issues in narrative texts*
- *signals a personal opinion about a narrative heard or read*
- *gives considered reasons for opinions and listens to those of others*
- *rehearses and tells a narrative to peers or younger children using approaches to engage the reader*
- *identifies and uses the main organisational structure and key language features of spoken narratives*
- *identifies themes in narratives such as good vs evil, strong vs weak*
- *identifies how the language of the text shapes attitudes to subject matter and character.*

### Learning Experiences

- Have students research and discuss the purpose of narratives in different cultures. Discuss reasons for the importance of oral storytelling in cultures.
- Have students listen to stories from a variety of cultures and identify common themes. Discuss those themes that recur across cultural groups, and how they extend the purpose of narrative to include moral or cautionary elements.
- Discuss the effectiveness of a narrative's title after reading the text. Does the title reflect the story? Why might the author have chosen the title? What ideas does the title evoke? What effect does the title have on prospective audience for the text? Ask the students to suggest alternative titles.
- Identify the purposes of oral storytelling in different cultures and suggest possible reasons why some cultures value oral records more than others, eg *Aboriginal Dreaming stories*.
- After they have listened to oral narratives, have students discuss the effect of different saying verbs used by storytellers and authors. Identify information given by these verbs about characters, eg *I know the character didn't want to do it, because the author used the verb 'grumbled'.*
- Use oral cloze during shared reading or storytelling so that students may predict what might happen next in the story. Identify aspects of the story that have influenced predictions. After reading, consider how author is using or manipulating narrative organisation to create particular effects.
- Refer to narrative stages to provide assistance to peers planning an oral narrative, eg *'You need to include more detail about where the story takes place in your orientation.'*
- Invite authors to come and discuss/read their work. Have students identify the significant influences on the author, important beliefs, special interests and consider how these are reflected in their writing.
- Identify idioms used in narratives, eg *raining cats and dogs*, and brainstorm meanings. Discuss how the meaning and use of idioms vary between cultural and social groups.
- Retell narratives through drama, altering the mood of the story through voice, music and sound effects, eg *exaggerate a fairytale to have it appear as a melodrama.*
- Have students listen to repeated readings of a text to identify layers of meaning, eg *different character's point of view, language choices made to shape reader's opinions.*
- Have students improvise a short drama based on part of a familiar narrative. Give students time to practise their presentation.



## Stage 3

## READING

## Narrative

**Outcomes**

- RS3.5 Reads independently an extensive range of texts with increasing content demands and responds to themes and issues.
- RS3.6 Uses a comprehensive range of skills and strategies appropriate to the type of text being read.
- RS3.7 Critically analyses techniques used by writers to create certain effects, to use language creatively, to position the reader in various ways and to construct different interpretations of experience.
- RS3.8 Identifies the text structure of a wider range of more complex text types and discusses how the characteristic grammatical features work to influence readers' and viewers' understanding of texts.

**Indicators**

- identifies ways in which texts appeal to certain readers and viewers
- compares the organisational structures of different types of narratives
- offers an opinion on aspects of narratives such as characters, ideas, themes, issues, setting, style and mood
- identifies language shaping the reader's attitude to subject matter and characters. Identifies metaphor, idiom, personification.

**Learning Experiences**

- Provide a variety of narratives, eg *science fiction*, *historical fiction*, for students to read in independent and shared and guided reading experiences. Discuss common themes and issues.
- Provide shared, guided and independent reading experiences for students to explore a variety of narratives.
- Read a variety of narratives including fables, myths, parables and consider the purpose of each text. Note that many narratives extend the purpose of entertainment to include moral or cautionary elements.
- Have students identify stereotypes and figures of authority or power in narratives. Have students examine strategies used by authors to create power in these characters, eg *descriptions of appearance and actions*, *use of symbols*, *reactions of other characters*.
- Have students investigate the organisation of time in narratives by creating a timeline for a narrative they have read. Discuss the effects of the author's choices, eg *flashback to explain a character's reactions*, *long periods of time summarised in a sentence or paragraph to keep story moving*.
- Point out narratives that manipulate the usual structure, eg *start with resolution, followed by flashback to events*. Discuss the effectiveness of different organisation.
- Have students compare the book and film versions of the same narrative by identifying similarities and differences in the setting, storyline and portrayal of characters. Identify different methods used to convey the story, eg *descriptive passages in book replaced with scary music, dim lighting in film*.
- Jointly construct a list of emotive language and exaggeration in a familiar narrative. Discuss the effects of these word choices, eg *elicit sympathy*, *increase tension*, *identify with a particular character*.
- In shared, guided and independent reading, have students read narratives that deviate from a simple narrative structure.
- Compare elements of the visual text such as cover, illustrations, title page in different versions of the same text, eg *old/new*, *different publishers*. Identify differences and discuss possible reasons for these, eg to update visual text, production cost. Justify the selection of the most effective version with reference to particular features of the visual text.
- Have students examine picture books in which the illustrations play a symbolic role or convey ideas not directly stated in the text. Discuss understandings of the story and interpretations of the images and identify how the visual text in picture books can allow for different levels of meaning.
- Give students a selection of picture story books to arrange in order of most realistic illustrations to least realistic illustrations. Encourage students to justify their choices and to discuss the effect of having highly realistic visuals in a picture book or how highly unrealistic visuals affect the meanings contained in a picture book.
- Have students, in small groups, read a short playscript and discuss interpretations. Small groups develop stage directions and descriptions of stage set, furniture and props needed. Have groups share interpretations and explain/justify choices by referring to script.
- Read a selection of Australian bush ballads and identify character similarities, eg *occupation*, *age*, *gender*, *nationality*. Discuss which groups are most/least represented and why.
- Encourage students to discuss the intended audiences for different narratives, eg *young children*, *boys*, *girls*, *teenagers*. Critically consider ways in which authors cater for intended audiences, eg *cute pictures/characters for young children*, *choice of subject matter for boys/girls*.



## Stage 3

## WRITING

## Narrative

### Outcomes

- WS3.9 Produces a wide range of well-structured and well-presented literary and factual texts for a wide variety of purposes and audiences using increasingly challenging topics, ideas, issues and written language features.
- WS3.10 Uses knowledge of structure, grammar and punctuation to edit own writing.
- WS3.11 Spells most common words accurately and uses a range of strategies to spell unfamiliar words.
- WS3.12 Produces texts in a fluent and legible style and uses computer technology to present these effectively in variety of ways.
- WS3.13 Critically analyses own texts in terms of how well they have been written, how effectively they present the subject matter and how they influence the reader.
- WS3.14 Critically evaluates how own texts have been structured to achieve their purposes and discusses ways of related grammatical features and conventions of written language to shape readers' and viewers' understanding of texts.

### Indicators

- *writes narratives that consider the interests and needs of potential readers such as avoiding terms that may be seen as sexist or racist*
- *experiments with usual structure*
- *uses a range of types of verbs, noun group.*

### Learning Experiences

- Encourage students to read a variety of narratives and discuss possible subjects for writing.
- Select a narrative to read to the class but do not read the resolution. Have students predict the outcomes for characters beyond the end of what they have heard. In pairs, students write the resolution for the narrative.
- Jointly construct sections of narratives to model how to achieve certain effects, or address identified areas of need, eg *incorporate dialogue, link narrative events to resolution, explore motivation of characters.*
- Have students in pairs locate verbs in a section of narrative text. Ask them to use different colours to highlight different kinds of verbs, eg *red-action verbs, green-thinking verbs, blue-saying verbs, yellow-relating verbs.* Discuss which kinds of verbs are used most frequently and the purpose of each group of verbs in narratives, eg *to tell what's happening, to tell what's going on in a character's mind.*
- Jointly construct an editing checklist for students' own narratives, eg *Does orientation include who/where? Do descriptions of characters/locations give a clear picture? Do all details enhance the narrative's purpose? Is dialogue included? Are characters' motivations explained?*
- Design a flow chart that illustrates the choices and decisions with which a character is faced in a particular narrative. Rewrite sections of the narrative that would change if the character had made different choices.
- Jointly construct narratives that deviate from a simple narrative structure so that there may be more than one orientation, complication or resolution.
- Have students locate connectives in excerpts from published narratives. Group connectives according to their purpose, eg *giving a cause, adding information, adding elements, making comparisons.* Use these to develop a class chart to be used as a writing resource.
- Jointly construct a narrative where the reader is positioned to regard the events and/or characters in particular ways.
- Have students jointly construct innovations on a short narrative. Ask them to change different aspects, eg *write a fairy tale in a modern setting, change age/gender/personality of character.* Provide opportunities for students to share these narratives with each other and encourage them to comment on the effect of the changes.
- Encourage students to consider potential audiences when planning a narrative, and include details that would appeal to, assist, interest these readers.
- Discuss the effect created by the visual text in narratives, eg *cover illustration, size and style of font for title.* Have students select different fonts, layout and graphics to publish their own narratives and describe the intended effects.
- Write a short narrative play for performance by small group, whole class. The script may be jointly constructed or written independently.